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Research Article

Is there an association between Anti-Citrullinated Peptide Antibodies and the Severity of Rheumatoid Arthritis Parameters in Algerian Patients?

Siheme OUALI^{1,2*}, Khalida ZEMRI¹, Ferial SELLAM⁶; Noria HARIR^{1,2}, Zahira BENAÏSSA¹, Sid Tadj HEBRI³, Ouassini BENSABER⁴, Douniazad ELMEHADJI¹, Zouaoui NADJI³, Karima KAROUBI⁵

1. Department of Biology, Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes, (Ex ITMA), Algeria

2. Laboratory of Molecular Microbiology, Proteomics and Health, Algeria

3. Department of Internal Medicine, CHU Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria

4. Department of Functional Rehabilitation, CHU Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria

5. Department of internal medicine, EPH Benisaf- AinTemouchent, Algeria

6. National Research Center of Biotechnology. CRBT, Algeria

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The aim of this study was to demonstrate the relationships between anti-citrullinated peptide/protein antibodies status and clinical characteristics, disease severity, radiological damages and laboratory assessment in Algerian patients with Rheumatoid arthritis, as well as their importance like a predictive factor for the diagnosis of Rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Methods: 281 patients diagnosed with RA according to ACR 1987 criteria in the internal medicine and Functional Rehabilitation departments (the University Hospital of Sidi Bel Abbes) were enrolled in the study based on medical records including age, gender, disease duration, disease activity score (DAS28), joint damages, laboratory tests and treatment. All data were processed and analyzed via SPSS 22.0.

Results: 86.5% of patients were females with a mean age and disease duration of respectively 52.665 ± 12.3477 , 4.19 ± 4.050 . Patients with Anti-CCP positive (79.7%) presented a high disease activity ($p < 0.0001$), a long disease duration ($p = 0.016$) and a erosion damages ($p < 0.0001$). we did not found any significant relation between gender, hands damages and CRP. A logistic regression showed that the presence of Anti-CCP was associated with Erosion, disease activity, age and RF presence.

Conclusion: There was a strong relation between Anti-CCP antibodies status and the development of RA in Algerian patients. It could be considered as a useful predictor of disease severity.

Keywords: Rheumatoid Arthritis, Algerian Patients, Anti-Citrullinated Peptide/Protein Antibodies, Disease activity, Erosion, Severity.

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*Address for Correspondence:

Siheme OUALI, PhD Candidate in Biochemistry-Immunology, Department of Biology, Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes, (Ex ITMA), Algeria

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INTRODUCTION:

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory joint disease and sometimes extra-articular, characterized by irreversible destruction of joints and bones, disability and loss of function¹⁻²⁻³. With a prevalence of 0.5% among adults in Western countries, and 0.13% in north Africa (Algeria in particular)⁴⁻⁵, reliable clinical research with the use of specific tests would be very useful for the early diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis and therapeutic protocol⁶.

Several studies prove that anti-CCP (anti-citrullinated peptide/protein antibodies) and Rheumatoid Factors (RF), have been regarded as major factors in joint destruction⁷. Anti-CCP is a more specific marker compared to RF, due to their high specificity to RA⁸.

Recently, the Anti-CCP became a major test of disease course, joints erosion, severity and early diagnosis⁹⁻¹⁰⁻¹¹. It may be detectable before the onset of RA symptoms¹², which proves their importance in the pathophysiology of RA¹³. Furthermore, Anti-CCP antibodies has been involved in criteria for ACR/EURL 2010 classification (the American College of Rheumatology/European League Against Rheumatism)¹⁴.

The aim of this study was to investigate Anti-CCP status in western Algeria population and their association with clinical feature and medical managements (Disease activity, radiographic damages, erosion ...) of Algerian patients with RA, as well as their importance in the diagnosis of RA.

PATIENTS AND METHODS:

The population:

We carried out a cross study based on medical records over 281 patients with RA aged of 14 years or over; diagnosed between 2016 and 2019 at the level of Internal Medicine in partnership with Functional Rehabilitation Departments of the University Hospital of Sidi Bel Abbes.

Patients were diagnosed according to ACR 1987 criteria¹⁵. The local Ethics Committee of University Hospital has approved our study.

We recorded the demographic characteristic such as: sex, age; and clinical and managements like: Disease duration, Disease activity score (DAS28) (running from 0 to 10), Erosion, Radiologic Joint damage, Laboratory assessment and Medication.

Concerning DAS28, the threshold values are over 5.1 for high activity, from 5.1 to 3.2 for moderate activity, between 3.2 and 2.6 for low activity and less than 2.6 for remission¹⁶.

Statistical Analysis:

Patients' characteristics were presented as means and standard deviation for continuous variables and as frequencies and percentages for categorical variables.

For descriptive analysis we present the results as Mean±standard deviation and frequency (%). For the cross study, the categorical variables were tested using Pearson's χ^2 test and T test for continuous variables. Logistic regression was used to estimate the independent effects of some RA characteristics on the presence of anti-CCP.

All data were processed and analyzed via SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, IBM Corporation; Chicago, IL. August 2013). The level of significance was <5%.

RESULTS:

A total of 281 patients with rheumatoid arthritis were included in our cross study (86.5% were women ; females/males ratio 7.3947), the mean age was of 52.665±12.3477 (range 14-80); The most affected age group was ≥46 years with a rate of 74.4%, 8.2% of males were smokers, More than half of our patients were affected in hands joints (68.3%) followed by wrists (60.1%). The mean disease duration and DAS28 of the enrolled participants were 4.19±4.050 and 4.5128±1.23452 respectively. Concerning the disease activity, 1.1% of patients in the remission status, 13.5% with a low activity, 54.4% with a moderate activity and 31% with a high activity. Positive anti-ccp and RF were noted in 79.7% and 80.4% of patients respectively (Table 1).

Table 2 demonstrate a comparison of various factors such as gender; age; disease duration; erosion; tobacco status; joint damage; ESR; CRP and medication in two rheumatoid arthritis groups (positive and negative Anti-CCP groups). We noted a high signification between the erosion; DAS 28, high activity ; shoulders joints and the positive Anti-CCP group ($p < 0.0001$). We reported also a signification between Anti-CCp status and tobacco ($p = 0.047$), ESR ($p = 0.001$), Methotrexate use ($p = 0.003$).

Table 03 indicates an analysis of the characteristics of RA such as age; DAS28, joint damage, erosion, ESR in accordance with RF and Anti-CCP status.

We noticed a mutual association of Anti-CCP rate with DAS28 (Figure 1) and Disease duration (Figure 2)

The Binary logistic regression illustrated that the Anti-CCP status was significantly associated with age; disease duration; DAS28; ESR and RF (Table 4).

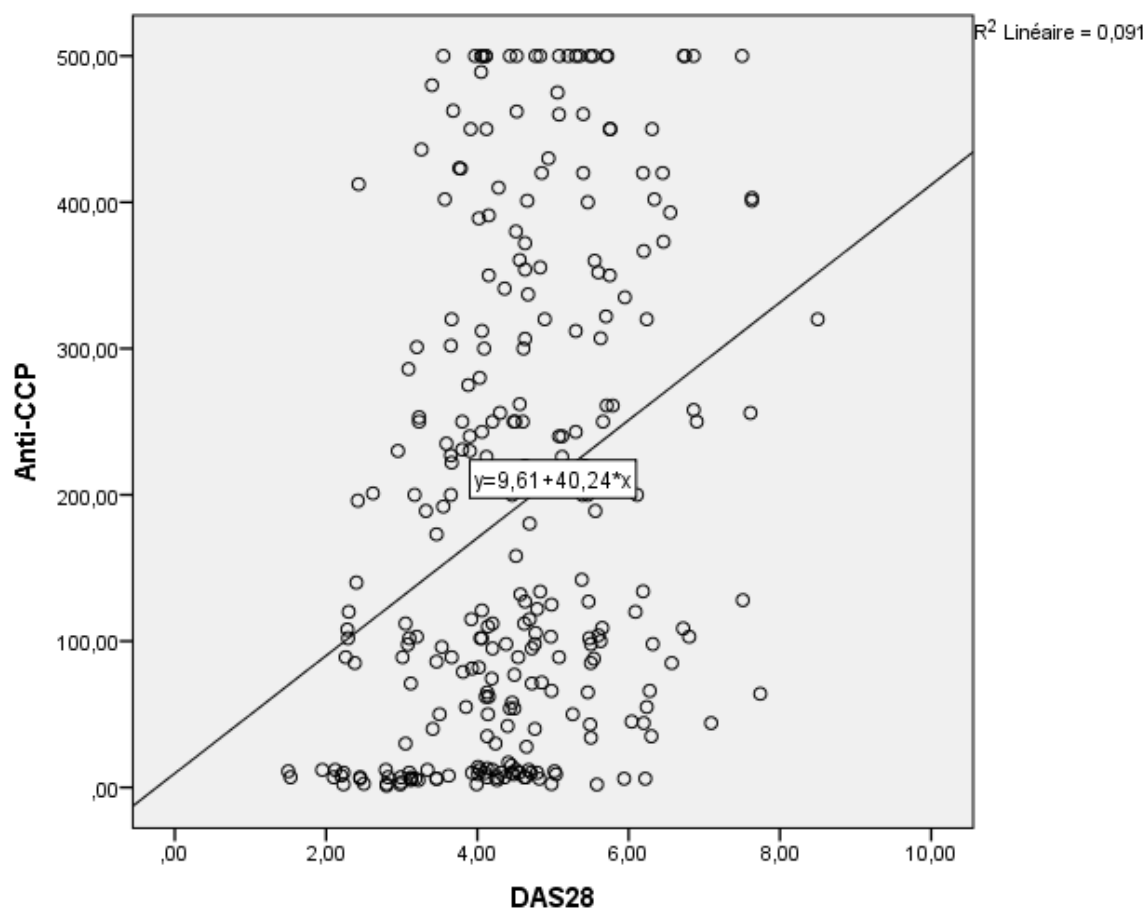


Figure 1: linear correlation between Anti-CCP titer and disease activity score (DAS28)

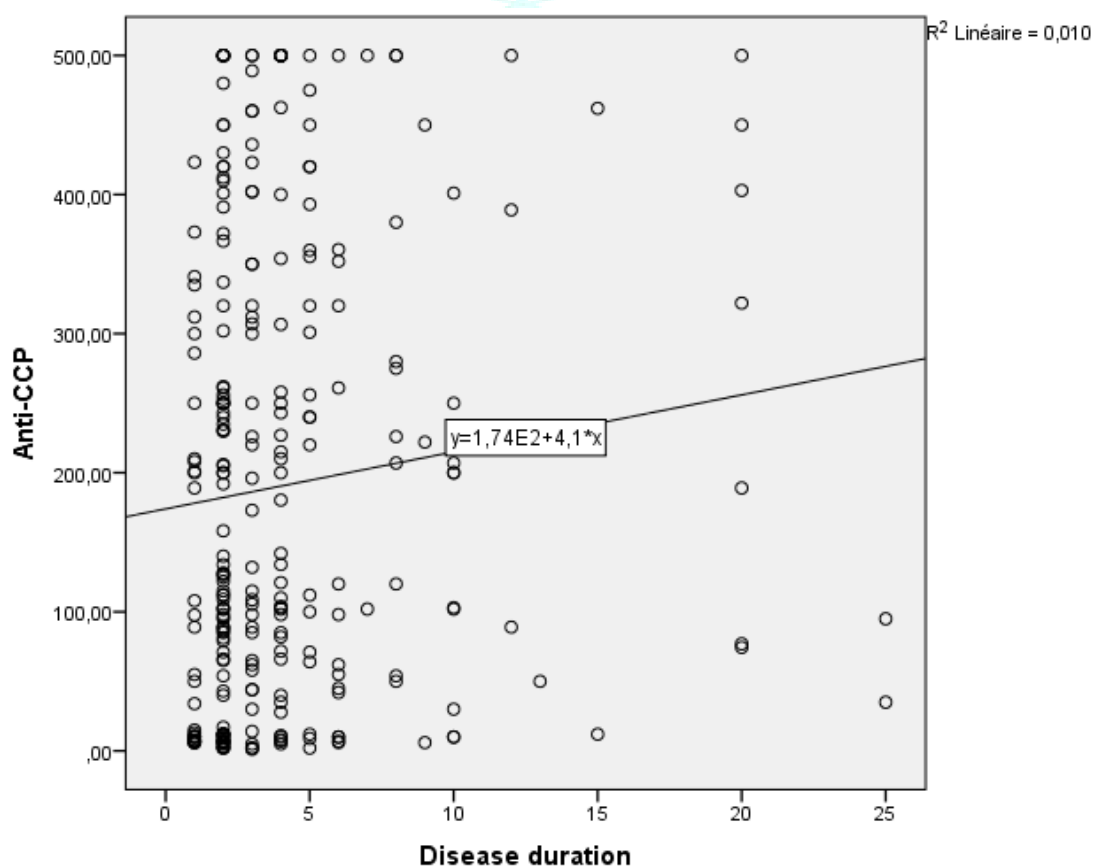


Figure 2: linear correlation between Anti-CCP titer and Disease duration

Table 1 : Caractéristiques of RA patients

| Characteristics (Mean±SD) or n(%) | Rheumatoid arthritis n=281 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Female gender | 243(86.5%) |
| Age (years) | 52.665±12.3477 |
| ≤ 45 | 72(25.6%) |
| ≥46 | 209(74.4%) |
| Disease duration (years) | 4.19±4.050 |
| Comorbidity | |
| Type 2 diabetes | 40(14.2%) |
| Hypertension | 114(40.6%) |
| active tobacco (males) | 23(8.2%) |
| Radiologic Joint damage | |
| Hands | 192(68.3%) |
| Wrists | 169(60.1%) |
| Knees | 158(56.2%) |
| Elbows | 109(38.8%) |
| Shoulders | 100(35.6%) |
| Feet | 86(30.6%) |
| Ankle | 44(15.7%) |
| Erosion | 67(23.8%) |
| DAS28 | 4.5128±1.23452 |
| Disease activity | |
| Remission | 3(1.1%) |
| Low | 38(13.5%) |
| Moderate | 153(54.4%) |
| High | 87(31%) |
| Anti-CCP titer (UI/ml) | 191.1977±164.87025 |
| Positive Anti-CCP | 224(79.7%) |
| RF titer (UI/ml) | 68.5438±76.30074 |
| Positive RF | 226(80.4%) |
| ESR titer (mm/h) | 43.434±24.8095 |
| Accelerated ESR | 230(81.9%) |
| CRP titer | 17.9390±28.69422 |
| Positive CRP | 184(65.5%) |
| Medication | |
| Methotrexate | 226(80.4%) |
| leflunomide | 45(16%) |
| Hydroxychloroquine | 4(1.4%) |
| Glucocorticoid | 159(56.6%) |

Table 2: Data based on Anti-CCP status in RA patients

| Characteristics n(%) | RA patients n=281 | | P value |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Positive Anti-CCP n=224 | Negative Anti-CCP n=57 | |
| Female gender | 32(11.39%) | 6(2.14%) | 0.459 |
| Age (years) | 51.192±12.940 | 58.456±11.2870 | <0.0001 |
| Disease duration (years) | 4.48±4.280 | 3.04±2.712 | 0.016 |
| Erosion | 64(22.78%) | 3(1.07%) | <0.0001 |
| Active tobacco (males) | 22(7.83%) | 1(0.36%) | 0.047 |
| Disease activity | | | |
| Remission | 1(0.36%) | 2(0.71%) | 0.045 |
| Low | 18(6.41%) | 20(7.12%) | <0.0001 |
| Moderate | 123(43.77%) | 30(10.68%) | 0.758 |
| High | 82(29.18%) | 5(1.78%) | <0.0001 |
| DAS28 | 4.7166±1.19056 | 3.7119±1.07554 | <0.0001 |
| Joint damage | | | |
| Hands | 158(56.23%) | 34(12.10%) | 0.115 |
| Wrists | 144(51.25%) | 25(8.90%) | 0.005 |
| Knees | 126(44.84%) | 32(11.39%) | 0.988 |
| Elbows | 94(33.45%) | 15(5.34%) | 0.030 |
| Shoulders | 93(33.10%) | 7(2.49%) | <0.0001 |
| Feet | 71(25.27%) | 15(5.34%) | 0.431 |
| Ankle | 39(13.88%) | 5(1.78%) | 0.109 |
| Laboratory assessment | | | |
| ESR(mm/h) | 45.875±25.0779 | 33.842±21.3473 | 0.001 |
| CRP (UI/ml) | 19.0826±31.27544 | 13.4451±13.99490 | 0.186 |
| Drugs use | | | |
| Methotrexate | 188(66.90%) | 38(13.52%) | 0.003 |
| leflunomide | 35(12.46%) | 10(3.56%) | 0.724 |
| Hydroxychloroquine | 3(1.07%) | 1(0.36%) | 0.813 |
| Glucocorticoid | 132(46.98%) | 27(9.61%) | 0.116 |

Table 3: Characteristics of RA patients according to Anti-CCP and RF status.

| Characteristics n(%)/(Mean±SD) | RA patients n=281 | | | P value |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| | Anti-CCP- FR- N=55 | Anti-CCP- FR+ N=2 | Anti-CCP+ RF+ N=224 | |
| Female gender | 50(17.79%) | 1(0.36%) | 192(68.33%) | 0.191 |
| Age (years) | | | | |
| ≤ 45 | 6(2.14%) | 00 | 66(23.49%) | 0.013 |
| ≥46 | 49(17.44%) | 2(0.71%) | 158(56.23%) | |
| Disease duration (years) | | | | |
| <4 | 41(14.59%) | 1(0.36%) | 124(44.13%) | 0.033 |
| 5-11 | 13(4.63%) | 1(0.36%) | 86(30.60%) | 0.112 |
| 12-18 | 1(0.36) | 00 | 5(1.78%) | 0.961 |
| >18 | 00 | 00 | 9(3.20%) | 0.306 |
| Erosion | 2(0.71%) | 1(0.36%) | 64(22.78%) | <0.0001 |
| Active tobacco(males) | 00 | 1(0.36%) | 22(7.83) | 0.006 |
| Disease activity | | | | |
| Remission | 2(0.71%) | 00 | 1(0.36%) | 0.118 |
| Low | 20(7.12%) | 00 | 18(6.41%) | <0.0001 |
| Moderate | 28(9.96%) | 2(0.71%) | 123 | 0.373 |
| High | 5(1.78%) | 00 | 82(29.18%) | <0.0001 |
| Joint damage | | | | |
| Hands | 33(11.74%) | 1(0.36%) | 158(56.23%) | 0.276 |
| Wrists | 23(8.19%) | 2(0.71%) | 144(51.25%) | 0.005 |
| Knees | 31(11.03%) | 1(0.36%) | 126(44.84%) | 0.948 |
| Elbows | 14(4.98%) | 1(0.36%) | 94(33.45%) | 0.075 |
| Shoulders | 6(2.14%) | 1(0.36%) | 93(33.10%) | <0.0001 |
| Feet | 14(4.98%) | 1(0.36%) | 71(25.27%) | 0.558 |
| Ankle | 4(1.42%) | 1(0.36%) | 39(13.88%) | 0.073 |
| Accelerated ESR | 39(13.88%) | 2(0.71%) | 189(6.26%) | 0.054 |
| Positive CRP | 32(11.39%) | 1(0.36%) | 151(53.74%) | 0.391 |
| Methotrexate intake | 36(12.81%) | 2(0.71%) | 188(66.90%) | 0.007 |

Table 4: Binary regression for the presence of Anti-CCP

| Factors | RA Patients n= 281 | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| | OR | 95% IC | P value |
| Age (years) | 0.945 | 0.919-0.973 | <0.0001 |
| Disease duration (years) | 1.159 | 1.023-1.313 | 0.021 |
| DAS28 | 2.230 | 1.648-3.017 | <0.0001 |
| ESR(mm/h) | 1.024 | 1.009-1.039 | 0.001 |
| CRP (UI/ml) | 1.014 | 0.995-1.034 | 0.146 |
| RF (UI/ml) | 1.158 | 1.112-1.206 | <0.0001 |

DISCUSSION:

Positive anti-CCP status is primarily associated with bone loss, disability, disease duration and disease activity in RA patients¹⁷. Our cross study showed this relationship between clinical characteristics, disease activity, joints damages and Anti-CCP status in Algerian RA patient from western Algeria (Sidi Bel Abbes region in particular).

BARRA.L et al illustrated that positive Anti-CCP group were younger ($p<0.0001$) with a longer disease duration¹⁸. Moreover, ARNAB.B et al, reported a similar results regarding the duration of the disease and Anti-CCP ($p=0.003$)¹⁹. Orsolini. G et al²⁰ reported as well a correlation between disease duration and Anti-CCP status ($p=0.014$). Anti-CCP negative patients were older with less disease activity²¹.

There is a strong association between anti-CCPs and radiological joints damages²². Ghazlani et al²³ confirm the influence of anti-CCPs status on radiological erosion ($p=0.001$). Furthermore. Yang et al²⁴ noted a high correlation between Anti-CCP positive and severe joint damage (<0.005). Another study by Im et al¹³ showed a significant association between erosion and Anti-CCP positive ($p=0.0024$). Barra et al¹⁸ conclude the same result in 160 patients ($p=0.0058$). However, the results of Slimani et al²¹ disagreed with previous investigations, they did not find any relation between erosion and Anti-CCP status.

In RA there is a significant association between RF, anti-ccp and disease severity²³⁻²⁵. However, patients positive for anti-CCP and RF both had a high risk of disease progression²⁶. In addition, Forslind et al.²² show that anti-CCP appeared to be an important predictor in early RA. Nonetheless, Barra et al¹⁸ did not find any significant association between RF positivity and erosive disease.

A significant relation between radiologic assessment of wrist, hands and positive Anti-CCP was observed in the Serdaroğlu et al data²⁷. In our investigation we found a significant correlation between wrist radiologic damages and positive Anti-CCP patients ($p=0.005$).

According to another investigation²⁸⁻²⁹⁻³⁰⁻³¹. Our study demonstrate a high association between Anti-CCP status and DAS28 ($p<0.0001$). These results were in contradiction with some studies from Tunisia, Thailand, Egypt and Italy²⁵⁻³⁰⁻³²⁻²⁰.

There was no significant correlation between the analyses of laboratory assessment and positive Anti-CCP²³⁻³³⁻¹⁸⁻²⁷, many studies disagreed with this investigation¹⁹⁻²¹⁻²²⁻³⁴⁻³⁵, they found a high significant relation between ESR and Anti-CCP status similar to our results ($p=0.001$).

Smoking increases the high secretion of anti-CCP antibodies in RA patients with shared epitope³⁶⁻³⁷. Forslind et al²², García de Veas Silva et al³⁸ reported a high significant association between Anti-CCP status and smoking. Our data demonstrate a significant association ($p=0.047$). Other studies¹⁸⁻²⁰ were paradoxical with previous results that showed no significant difference between tobacco status and positive Anti-CCP.

Likewise, The most common received drug in our data was Methotrexate with a significant difference with Positive Anti-CCP patients ($p=0.003$). Nevertheless, some studies did not find any correlation between Methotrexate use and Anti-CCP positive¹⁸⁻²¹.

CONCLUSION:

Our data showed that Algerian RA patients with positive Anti-CCP antibodies have an active high disease activity and

long disease duration. Anti-CCP was considered as a predictor factor for, radiologic erosion joint progression and as prognostic factor of RA to predict the course of disease activity and the effectiveness of the treatment. Further studies on larger numbers of patients are needed to confirm our findings.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

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